

WYCOMBE WANDERERS 1, AYLESBURY UNITED 2

WYCOMBE Wanderers failed to make sure of becoming the first ever Shaw and Kilburn Floodlit League champions on Thursday and gave Banbury United, currently in second place, every chance to overhaul them on the run in.

Two home defeats in one week in this league — the Blues lost on Monday to Witney Town — may have thrown away the title which for so long had looked to be in the bag.

Wycombe fielded their strongest side, with only Keith Mead sidelined by injury. United, however, played four reserves due to a crop of injuries. Ian Barnes, their reserve goalkeeper played at No. 6.

The Blues' first half performance was little short of appalling. Although forcing half a dozen corners to United's one, Wycombe's apparent disinterest in the proceedings gave United time and space to move, and after a settling period of some twenty minutes, the visitors began to look as though they might score.

Peter Spittle, in the Wanderers' goal, looked short of match practice. He fumbled two or three crosses he would have dealt with easily before injury put him out of the side, and the back four missed Keith Mead's steady influence.

United's midfield began to take control, with Leo Markham their inspiration and scorer of their first goal from a corner.

And five minutes later the Blues' lethargy got its just desserts when Vince Melisi nipped in to intercept a sloppy back-pass. His first shot smacked against an upright, but he made no mistake with the rebound.

Overhead

Aylesbury almost made it 3-0 after 40 minutes, when a Melisi overhead kick went only just wide.

Wanderers started the second half with more purpose, and began to show their true ability. In the first three minutes, four corners were gained, with Alan Phillips getting in his first header at goal from one of them. But the United goalkeeper had a fine game throughout, making up for lack of height with positioning and agility.

On 49 minutes he was

forced to punch clear from a Davies cross and Paul Birdseye began to move down the right, putting over one or two useful crosses.

Aylesbury panicked a little in defence as the Wycombe pressure continued and Howard Kennedy was allowed to break loose through a ruck of players to score from a seemingly impossible angle, the ball rebounding off the far post.

Painter debut

Another half dozen corners during the second half to a single one from Aylesbury, shows the amount of pressure the Wanderers continued to exert, but as has often been the case this season, the goals would not come.

Although hard pressed for the entire 45 minutes, Markham, Catlin and Abell stayed firm.

One of the highlights of an exciting second-half was the Wycombe debut of Alan Painter, who came on for Tony Horseman after 78 minutes. The Blues have been woefully short of strikers all season, but in the short time available to him, Painter showed how it should be done.

A Harris volley, a vicious shot from Kennedy and Priestley's 30 yarder were closing efforts that deserved better.